

How to Minimize Water Pollution from Your Yard Due to PESTICIDES

Pollutants washed from your residence may harm aquatic life in our creeks, wetlands and Bay. Rain and irrigation water can wash pesticides from your yard, driveway, and sidewalks into gutters. This runoff will flow to a storm drain, which drains untreated into a nearby creek, which in turn flows to the Bay. Protect creek and Bay wildlife by applying pesticides carefully, sparingly, and only when necessary.

PESTICIDE FACTS

Note: Used here, the word pesticide refers to any insecticide or weed killer, in either wet or dry form.

- Residential gardeners reportedly use up to 10 times more toxic chemicals per acre than farmers.
- Even if sprinkler water dries out in the gutter before it reaches the storm drain, dried chemical residues are just “waiting” for the next rain to dissolve and wash to your neighborhood creek.
- Some pesticides are persistent in the environment: they break down slowly. The longer the time period between pesticide application and the next rain, the less residue to wash to your local creek.
- Insecticides have adverse effects on humans, fish, birds, and beneficial insects (at varying concentrations).

- In the 1995-96 rainy season, laboratory tests showed that the water in three Santa Clara County creeks, contained diazinon (an insecticide) at toxic concentrations.

WAYS TO PREVENT PESTICIDE POLLUTION FROM YOUR YARD

- Use pesticides only when you have a significant problem.
- Use less toxic alternatives. Read the brochure, Pests Bugging You?, to learn about less-toxic pest control methods. Call 945-3000 for a free copy.
- Leave a one-foot buffer zone between the edge of sidewalks and where you apply lawn or garden chemicals. This will help prevent sprinklers or rain from washing these chemicals into the gutter and storm drain.
- Use pesticides only after the rainy season is over, and never when rain is forecast.
- Apply pesticides only at the dosage recommended on the container.
- Mix only as much as you will use.
- Properly dispose of all unused pesticides by calling the Santa Clara County Household Hazardous Waste Program at 299-7300.

Prepared by the City of San Jose Environmental Services Department. Call 945-3000 for more information.